

Chairs' Letter

Dear Friends,

We have had the honor to serve as Co-Chairs of the Parks Legacy Citizens Advisory Committee for the past six months. As directed by City Council Resolution 31454 (May 2013), the Legacy Committee was tasked to evaluate the need for and the composition of a potential ballot measure for funding operations, maintenance, development and acquisition of parks and recreation facilities and programs. This report summarizes the work of the Committee from its first meeting in June through mid-December 2013, and includes the Committee's **preliminary** recommendation for the investment initiatives that will be included in a new ballot measure to provide sustainable funding for Seattle Parks and Recreation.

The purpose of this report is to provide the foundation for public review of the Committee's preliminary recommendation, leading to a final report/recommendation by mid-March 2014. Public review will occur at three community meetings in January:

- January 23, International District Community Center
- January 28, High Point Community Center
- January 30, Bitter Lake Community Center

The Committee members have spent thousands of volunteer hours serving on this Committee and, as Co-Chairs of the Legacy Committee, we have spent over 500 hours since our appointment last May. We, and *all* the volunteers serving on the Committee, devoted our time to this work because we strongly believe in the importance of and benefits from parks and recreation. We believe in the department's values of access, opportunity and sustainability, and we've heard widespread concurrence with these values from the community. The draft Parks Legacy Plan documents the benefits to the community brought by parks and recreation, including:

- Physical health benefits from exercise;
- Respite from the urban environment;
- Mental health benefits from both exercise and having contact with nature;
- Environmental and climate benefits provided by park trees and the natural features of parks;
- Economic benefits generated through increased tourism and property values; and
- Community benefits from offering people places to gather, meet neighbors and build relationships.

While our work is not done, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Committee, Parks Department staff, and City staff for their tireless work and dedication to caring for Seattle's parks and recreation system. And we would like to thank the people of Seattle for sharing their passions and ideas with us. We look forward to continuing our work towards a final Committee recommendation in mid-March.

Sincerely,

Barbara Wright

Charlie Zaragoza

Parks Legacy Citizens Advisory Committee

Interim Report – November 26, 2013

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Section 1: Executive Summary *(not ready yet)*

A. Intro

B. Committee Process

C. Summary Recommendation

Section 2: Background

A. Resolution 31454

In May 2013 the City Council approved Resolution 31454, creating the Parks Legacy Citizens Advisory Committee. The Resolution created the Committee to “ensure citizen participation in the development of a potential ballot measure for funding operations, maintenance, development and acquisition of parks and recreation facilities and programs.” To that end, the Resolution directs the Committee to:

- a. Review data and information about existing and potential park and recreation projects, maintenance and operations, and programs.
- b. Review the draft Parks Legacy Plan and its findings and provide input and comment.
- c. Review and comment on criteria for assessing Parks investment initiatives and options for the Mayor and Council's consideration.
- d. Apply criteria and review investment initiatives prepared by City staff and provide comments and/or recommendations for Mayor and Council consideration.
- e. Review pros and cons for potential funding mechanisms for implementing the investment initiatives, including consideration of the dollar amount needed to fund them and whether permanent or short-term funding is needed or appropriate, and make recommendations.
- f. If a short-term funding solution is considered, then the Committee will address the pros and cons of various term lengths and make recommendations.
- g. If a permanent funding solution is considered, then the Committee will address the pros and cons of appropriate funding mechanisms, including a permanent levy and a Metropolitan Parks District, and make recommendations.
- h. Conduct outreach to the broader public to gather recommendations and comments.

Interim Report of the Parks Legacy Citizens' Advisory Committee
Draft Report for Discussion

i. Advise the Mayor and City Council on the pros and cons for moving forward with a possible ballot measure in 2014 to replace the current parks levy, which expires at the end of 2014.

j. Submit a final report with findings to the Mayor and City Council by March 14, 2014.

B. Committee Members

There are 15 members of the Parks Legacy Citizens Advisory Committee, appointed by the Mayor and the City Council, and confirmed by Resolution 31454. Members are:

Barbara Wright, Co-Chair

Charlie Zaragoza, Co-Chair

Thatcher Bailey

Steve Daschle

Bill Farmer

Juli Farris

Thomas Goldstein

Jessie Israel

Diana Kincaid

Michael Maddux

Brice Maryman

Yalonda Gill Masundire

Mustapha Math

Erika Melroy

David Namura

C. Committee Proceedings

As directed by City Council Resolution 31454, the Parks Legacy Citizens Advisory Committee has been evaluating the need for and the composition of a potential ballot measure for funding operations, maintenance, development and acquisition of parks and recreation facilities and programs. Agendas, notes, and materials for each of the Committee meetings are posted on the Committee's web page:

<http://www.seattle.gov/parks/legacy/committee.htm>

Since its first meeting in June 2013, the Committee:

- Gained a deep understanding of Seattle Parks and Recreation via the Parks Legacy Plan, briefings, tours, and public input;
- Developed criteria to evaluate investment initiatives for inclusion in a ballot measure;

- Applied the criteria to 37 initiatives; and
- Evaluated a range of funding options.

The 37 investment initiatives were divided between and ranked into priority order by three subcommittees of the full Committee: Existing, New and Partnerships. Each subcommittee prioritized the initiatives based on the their application of the assessment criteria, public input, and input from Parks' Race and Social Justice Change Team. After hearing from the public at the November 7 public hearing and considering public comments delivered to the Committee in a variety of ways, the full Committee merged the subcommittee priority lists into a preliminary recommendation (See Section 5: Preliminary Findings).

Hall Walker, Deputy Budget Director, and Ben Noble, Director of City Council Central Staff, briefed the Committee on a range of funding mechanism options at the October 3 meeting. A panel discussion of funding mechanisms followed at the October 17 meeting, with Beth Goldberg, City Budget Director, Ken Bounds, former Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation, and Ben Noble. The Committee discussed the funding mechanism options at the December 5 meeting and a funding mechanism recommendation will be made in early 2014.

To provide the Committee with a national context regarding sustainable funding for urban park systems, the Seattle Parks Foundation and the Associated Recreation Council sponsored a presentation by Candace Damon, a nationally renowned expert on creating vibrant, viable cities. On October 22, Ms. Damon described a range of sustainable funding options implemented in cities around the country and discussed their applicability in Seattle.

Section 3: Problem Statements

In evaluating the need for a potential ballot measure, the Committee recognized several problems facing Seattle Parks and Recreation through a detailed look at the department's operations, discussions with staff, and extensive public comment:

- Parks and facilities are deteriorating at an alarming rate, and there is simply not enough funding for major repairs to reverse the trend;
- Community centers aren't open enough to adequately serve the public;
- Routine maintenance of both parks and facilities isn't up to the high standards set by the people of Seattle;
- Changing demographics are changing how people recreate, putting pressure on the department to adapt;
- The City's General Fund has proven unable to support basic departmental functions and services; and

- The department hasn't had the resources to effectively support partnerships that benefit the public while saving taxpayer money.

Tackling these problems will require a comprehensive strategy that supports and holds the department accountable while investing in areas that will benefit the people of Seattle the most. The Committee's recommended solutions to the above problems are found in [Section 5: Preliminary Findings](#).

A. Problem Statement: Significant Major Maintenance Backlog

Respondents to the Parks Legacy Plan survey allocated \$64.20 of a hypothetical \$100 Parks budget to routine and major maintenance, with major maintenance allocated \$28.80 out of \$100. Clearly, people in Seattle want to see their parks and facilities maintained to a high standard. Voters have also made significant investments in new parks and facilities over the past 30 years through levies and bond measures. Over time, however, major maintenance needs have outstripped funding—leaving the City unable to match Seattle voters' high standards for park and facility quality. If this trend continues, not only will the total cost of the maintenance backlog increase, but the cost of individual projects will also increase as assets deteriorate over time.

Major maintenance refers to one-time, large-scale maintenance needs at both parks and facilities. Boiler replacements, roof replacements, electrical upgrades, and even facility replacements are examples of major maintenance projects. The list of unfunded but needed major maintenance projects—the backlog—continues to grow, and now totals \$267 million spread across nearly 300 projects. The backlog has grown mostly because of two reasons: a large number of older facilities and assets reaching the end of their life cycles, and insufficient funding.

Seattle Parks and Recreation operates 465 parks, 26 community centers, ten pools, four golf courses, and much more. Forward Thrust, the 1968 bond package, funded the largest expansion of the park system in Seattle history, and built more than 70 new parks and facilities, including the Seattle Aquarium. Most of those facilities and assets have now operated for 30 years or more—about the length of time during which needs become apparent and require upgrades and repairs. Many projects that should already have been completed were placed on hold because of insufficient funding, causing the asset needing repair to degrade further, and eventually cost more to repair or replace.

Major maintenance projects are usually funded through the Cumulative Reserve Subfund (CRS)—a highly variable revenue stream derived from a tax on property sales and new building construction. For example, annual city revenue from taxes on property sales and new building construction rose to \$70 million during last decade's construction boom, but fell to \$20 million 18 months later as Seattle entered the recession. The City also chooses how to allocate CRS funds among departments each year—adding to CRS's instability as a funding source. This funding source is reliably inconsistent and prevents the department from fully addressing major maintenance needs as they arise.

A further impediment is the lack of a coordinated, computer-based "smart" asset management system. Parks' current system can't coordinate work orders, preventive scheduled maintenance, and major

maintenance. Without data on the age, condition, life cycle, and location of each asset, and the capability to process and cross-reference that data, Parks can't strategically address the \$267 million backlog or make the most efficient use of staff time.

Seattle voters have invested in a high-quality, large-scale parks and recreation system. Yet the department's asset management program hasn't had the stable funding necessary to maintain the system to the standards set by the people of Seattle—leading to the \$267 million backlog and the slow deterioration of some of Seattle's most-beloved parks and facilities.

B. Problem Statement: Lack of Funding for Basic Services

Seattle Parks and Recreation places a high priority on providing services that benefit the community as a whole, such as operating community centers, maintaining facilities and infrastructure, and maintaining parks. These programs, however, have not had the resources to meet the public's expectations and needs.

1. Community Center Operations

Community centers are accessible to all, and are the foundation for low-cost recreation and activity programs that reach all corners of the community. Yet many centers simply don't have the resources to even hire a full-time janitor. During the recession, Parks successfully reorganized the community center operating model, reducing redundancy and increasing inter-center coordination. The efficiency gains, however, were outweighed by reductions in resources. While Tier 1 centers are open 70 hours per week—an adequate amount—each of eight Tier 2b centers are open to the public about 25 hours per week. Centers have worked to stretch those limitations, however, spreading resources and straining staff capacity to increase hours. This is unsustainable—the Associated Recreation Council (ARC) donated \$450,000 in both 2012 and 2013 to fund 11 needed assistant recreation coordinator positions, a generous gift that can't be expected to continue.

Community center hours open to the public per week, 2010-2013

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013
Hours open to public per week	1,402	1,238	1,115	1,140

2. Routine Park Maintenance

Park maintenance programs, because of a lack of adequate staff capacity and funding, are not ensuring the highest quality of use for the public while preventing asset deterioration. The past few years—along with significant increases in developed parkland funded by two voter-approved levies—saw budget pressures force the department's maintenance division to reduce trash pickups, mowing, and weeding while 42 positions were eliminated and 70 reduced to less-than-full-time. While it was necessary to reduce the department's maintenance capacity for a short period of time, over the long-term, parks need to be maintained to the high level of service that the people of Seattle invested in. Trash should be picked up, restrooms should be cleaned, and grass should be mowed. Additionally, the department

simply does not have the capacity to scale up maintenance programs in order to keep up with summer's peak park use season. A tree crew was also eliminated in 2011 in response to City budget reductions, reducing Parks' ability to perform preventive tree maintenance to once every 50 years, significantly less than the industry standard of once every 14 years.

3. Facility Maintenance

Long-term facility maintenance programs are not currently able to ensure a high quality of use for the public and prevent asset deterioration. Staff are unable to perform preventive maintenance projects because they play a reactive role, responding to roof repairs, electrical failures, and other urgent needs. The lack of a coordinated asset management technology system also makes it difficult to efficiently synchronize facility maintenance work orders with larger capital replacement projects. This reactive role comes at the expense of scheduled, planned maintenance tasks that prolong facilities' lives and usefulness. For example, recessionary budget pressures cut paint crew staffing in half, increasing the usual 8-10 year interval between paintings to 14 years. Some tasks can be reduced or put off for a year or two—and during the recession, many were. Continuing to maintain facilities to a lower standard, however, will eventually result in lower-quality facilities, and will make future improvements more difficult and expensive.

C. Problem Statement: Changing Demographics

Innovative, cutting edge, state-of-the-art—these may not be the first adjectives used to describe a large city agency like Seattle Parks and Recreation, but they are necessary qualities Parks must embody in order to meet future needs. As presented in the draft Parks Legacy Plan, changes in Seattle's population and emerging trends in recreation will require innovation and transformation at Parks.

Seattle, like many cities, has a growing, increasingly diverse population.

1. Population growth and density

While Seattle's population growth slowed in the latter part of the last decade, the city's population continues to grow and will continue to grow into the foreseeable future. Increased density adds pressure to the City's parks and recreation system to accommodate more people. Much of this density will concentrate in apartments and condominiums, which have no open space of their own—adding an even larger burden to the system. Increased density also reduces the availability of land for purchase and drives land prices up.

2. Age distribution

Young adults: Seattle's population has a higher percentage of people aged 20-34 than the rest of the state or the U.S as a whole—30% of the population. Younger people tend to recreate more in general, are more interested in team sports, and participate more in fitness activities. As long as Seattle's emphasis on higher education remains strong, young adults will remain a large proportion of the population, placing more burdens on parks, facilities, and athletic fields. Is Parks poised to provide services to this growing segment of the population?

The percentage of seniors in King County is 11%, lower than the national average. However, the senior share of the total population is projected to grow, reaching 20% by 2040. Recreation trends studies show seniors participate in fitness-oriented activities and walking. Are Parks facilities and staff aligned to meet the needs of our seniors?

Seattle's percentage of families with children is smaller than in the state or the U.S. as a whole—19% of the population. However, this segment of the population uses parks and recreation programs most extensively. With limited resources, how can we balance the competing demands for space in our community centers?

3. Ethnicities

Seattle's diversity increased over the past ten years. The Latino population has grown over the past decade, and both immigrants and refugees continue coming to Seattle, increasing cultural diversity and the need for culturally relevant programs. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated in its 2011 five-year American Community Survey that there are about 105,000 foreign-born individuals living in Seattle. The Parks Legacy Survey showed people of color place a higher value on using parks to socialize with family and neighbors, and also use community centers, playgrounds, athletic fields, recreation programs and picnic areas more than whites. How do these findings stand up to Parks' limited capacity for outreach to historically underrepresented communities and ability to provide culturally focused programs, such as the Women of the World Swims?

D. Problem Statement: Role of General Fund

Approximately two-thirds of Parks' 2013 revenue came from the City's General Fund. The General Fund is a stable funding source that supports ongoing, basic needs—or at least it should. The state-imposed limit on property tax revenue growth to 1% per year has slowly chipped away the General Fund's ability to fully fund the public's park and recreation needs. Voters invested millions in the park system's open spaces and buildings over the past decade, but Parks' General Fund revenue hasn't increased nearly enough to keep up with the system's increasing size and quality. In fact, the City's recent General Fund tax growth has been much lower than in previous post-recession periods.

The 1% growth limit's most significant consequence is its impact on basic departmental functions. General Fund revenues haven't kept pace with inflation or the system's expansion, forcing the department to reduce park and facility maintenance, cut staffing at community centers, and leave partnership and grant money on the table.

Other revenue sources play an important role in Parks budgeting. Revenue from fees, rentals and concessions contribute to diversifying Parks revenue base and supplementing the General Fund. However, Parks' commitment to access and equity has led to a fee structure which keeps fees low for programs for children and for programs with community rather than individual benefit.

The General Fund supports basic, core City services. During a recession, when tax revenues dry up, the City prioritizes public safety and human services for General Fund support. Parks and recreation services are, understandably, lower priorities.

Other City departments have found they are unable to fully fund their operations and maintenance through the General Fund, and have asked voters to impose levies to fund such basic functions. In 2012, Seattle voters passed a seven-year, \$122.6 million levy to fund library operations and maintenance. In 2006, voters passed a nine-year, \$365 million transportation levy, known as Bridging the Gap, to reduce the maintenance backlog and provide basic transportation services like paving and repairing streets, performing seismic upgrades to bridges, and improving safety.

Further discussion on funding measures in 2014 will include a comparison of the risks associated with general fund supplantation—a scenario where the presence of a funding mechanism, be it a levy or MPD, enables elected officials to cut General Fund support from the department.

E. Problem Statement: Leveraging Funds through Partnerships

Seattle is full of organizations, non-profits, and people working to achieve many of the same goals as Parks. There are groups working to educate youth and families about nature and the environment, non-profits that teach at-risk youth about healthy eating and wellness, a bevy of groups working to conserve and maintain plots of land both large and small, and more—Seattle is full of civic-minded people looking to make a difference. Partnerships benefit the public while saving taxpayer dollars by pulling in hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours each year, helping to fund improvements to parks and facilities, and even managing some facilities.

The demand for parks and recreation services in Seattle outstrips the department's General Fund support, and key partners need to be able to fill gaps in service. For example, the Woodland Park Zoo and the Aquarium are both located on Parks' property, and were once operated by Parks. They now are operated by non-profits that can use more nimble fundraising and staffing strategies. There's an opportunity for Parks to fully leverage such partnerships to meet the high demand for parks and recreation services, but the department isn't able to quickly respond to and support these groups, or provide needed seed resources to get projects off the ground.

Section 4: Public Input

Parks developed a comprehensive public involvement process which included a project website, extensive community and media outreach, briefings with City Councilmembers, community leaders, city departments, and the Associated Recreation Council. Press releases announcing all committee meetings

went to 400 local news outlets, multiple neighborhood blogs, the City's official minority media list, and the department's Parkways blog. Eighty-five individuals signed up to speak at the November public hearing, and an additional 530 people participated by emailing, writing, or speaking at a Parks Legacy Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting.

A public input summary can be found in Appendix A.

Section 5: Preliminary Findings

The Legacy Committee explored Seattle Parks and Recreation's operations and heard the public's needs, wants, and concerns. In doing so, we identified a number of problems currently facing the department, and problems facing the department in the future: there's a significant major maintenance backlog of deteriorating assets that need renovation, a lack of funding for basic services, a set of new demands and different tastes from Seattle's changing demographics, and an opportunity to leverage funds through partnerships. These problems can be addressed through a strategy of targeted investments in the parks and recreation system, stable funding, and departmental accountability.

To address the problems identified in Section 3, the Committee recommends the following:

A. Major Maintenance Backlog

As one Committee member stated, "we need places for people to go and something for them to do when they get there." To ensure that places are safe, welcoming, and enduring—now and into the future—the Committee decided the top funding priority is investment initiative #1, Address Asset Management Priority Projects. No organized constituency calls for mundane projects such as fixing leaky roofs or replacing outdated electrical systems, but the Committee learned through the Parks Legacy Plan survey and through staff and public testimony that taking care of what we have is the best way to ensure a successful future.

B. Funding Basic Services

1. Community Center Operations

Are community centers places for people to go for programs, such as yoga class or senior bridge games, or are they drop-in centers providing safe places for young people to gather and hang-out? The Committee heard from both seniors and teens that more programs are needed. The Committee also heard from both seniors and teens that more publicly available time is needed within places so people can simply gather and meet. This testimony and Parks' data showed the common thread is the need for more staffing, both to open the doors for longer hours and to provide more programming. The

Committee recommends investment initiative #2, Community Center Operations, with the recognition that the recent reorganization of center operations allowed for better coordination between centers; however, recession-mandated cuts to staffing levels have made the system close to unworkable. As one staff member told the Committee Co-Chairs: even a rubber band stretched too thin will break.

2. Routine Park Maintenance

As with major maintenance, there's no organized group calling for cleaner bathrooms and more frequent garbage and litter removal – it's just not the type of project people coalesce around. And yet, via the responses to the Legacy Plan survey and through Committee member park tours and experiences, we learned that day-to-day maintenance keeps parks welcoming and conducive to the healthy—community-building activities we want to see happening. Our recommendation for investment initiative #4, Regular Park Maintenance, reflects our understanding of the importance of providing safe, welcoming parks, centers, and pools.

3. Facility Maintenance

Committee members, after touring a variety of parks, noted that looking at parks with an eye to maintenance issues is a new perspective, and brought up a feeling that “we can do better”. Committee members also noted that some facilities are in great shape and others are in horrible shape—with not much in between. For example, with hundreds of people in and out of a community center each day, painting only once every 14 years is clearly not often enough. To remedy this situation, the Committee gives a high priority to initiative #5, Long-term Facility Maintenance. The funding for this initiative is closely tied to initiative #1, Major Maintenance funding, as more emphasis on regular facility maintenance and preventive care can reduce the need for a major maintenance renovation in the future.

C. Partnerships and Leveraging Funds

Partnerships come in all shapes and sizes, and the Committee heard testimony from representatives of a diverse group of partners. What we heard showed that partnerships are often an effective way to equitably deliver more access to services, above and beyond what Parks typically can provide itself. That's why partnerships are integral to our recommendation, and permeate our recommended investment initiatives. We've recommended investing in a major project opportunity challenge fund, which would match funds raised by community groups in order to pay for major improvements to Parks facilities, and we've recommended including significant major maintenance funding for both the Aquarium and Zoo—two of Parks' key partners. We've also recommended additional investments in the Green Seattle Partnership—the innovative, successful partnership that restores Seattle's forests one tree at a time.

Beyond these large investments, we're also recommending leveraging resources in other ways. First, we've recommended a number of initiatives that include or enhance a volunteer component. In 2012,

people volunteered almost 400,000 hours to Parks—hours spent clearing trails, pulling invasive weeds, and much more. These efforts greatly support the department's work, and should be supported.

We also recommend bolstering recreation programs that partner with community groups to provide access and opportunity for all. We recommend investing in the Activation bundle, which enhances Parks' ability to engage with the community and build partnerships to make sure parks are safe, fun, and clean. Parks already works with partners to activate public spaces, and additional investments will leverage even more community support and involvement in parks.

D. Access and Equity

Since the Committee began work in June, we have heard the need for access and equity in Parks' programs and services for underrepresented groups. We heard praise for existing programs such as the Women of the World Swims, we learned of the good work partnerships with organizations such as Neighborhood House accomplish at community centers, and we heard the importance of providing an equal quantity and quality of parks throughout the city. Further, the Committee learned Seattle's population is expected to increase, become proportionately older and more ethnically diverse. Seattle Parks and Recreation can wait for these changes to occur and then respond as demand for parks and programs change; or, as we recommend, Parks can anticipate the changes and proactively adjust to greet the future when it arrives. Improved outreach, more access to community centers and keeping programs affordable are all recommendations that anticipate the future.

The Committee heard frequently and with great passion the need for culturally-attuned programs such as women-only swims, and the importance of keeping programs affordable for immigrants and refugees. The high prioritization of initiative #22, Increase Ability to Engage Historically Underrepresented Communities, reflects both the City's changing demographics and Parks' current lack of staff capacity to perform needed outreach (for example, we learned how limited community center staffing—at times there is only one staff person in a center—can be a significant barrier to community outreach, as staff can't leave the facility to meet with people).

The Committee recommendations reflect what we've heard. Below are a few examples:

- Investment initiative #22, Increase Ability to Engage Historically Underrepresented Communities: The Committee increased the funding for this initiative from \$315,000 to \$465,000 in order to expand the reach of the program, and we recommend that some of the funding be provided to partners who may be better positioned to reach underrepresented populations.
- Investment initiative #2, Community Center Operations: As noted previously in this report, the funding for community center operations will both increase programming capacity and open center doors for more unprogrammed hours. This recommendation reflects what we heard at the November 7 public hearing: community centers are a great place to hang out.
- Activities for All Bundle: The Committee recommendations place programming for people—seniors, teens and those with disabilities—as a high priority. These programs, through initiatives

such as the senior Food and Fitness Program and the Late Night program for teens, provide needed access and opportunities for underrepresented populations.

E. Fostering Organization Change/Departmental Accountability

Seattle Parks and Recreation has all the required tools to be an industry leader—a large parks system with lots of variety, numerous community centers and facilities with something for everybody, and dedicated staff that truly care about the quality of parks and the well-being of the public. Any large organization, however, can become a defender of the status quo at the expense of new and innovative ideas. To ensure the department is accountable to the public, dynamic, and able to adapt to new conditions, we recommend:

- Greater reliance on and evaluation of performance standards to hold staff accountable;
- Funding for program audits;
- An annual report on the department's efforts to implement the ballot measure;
- Added communications capacity to connect with people the same way they connect with each other, via the internet and social media; and
- A survey of the public every two years to assess how well program implementation is meeting community needs.

To implement these strategies, we recommend applying an overhead cost to the full ballot measure. The amount of the overhead cost—the exact percentage of the total—will be recommended by the Committee in the final report (due mid-March) after more discussion and review of overhead components included in other ballot measures.

F. Recommended Investment Initiatives

The recommendations presented on the spreadsheet reflect a rigorous process. The Legacy Committee first developed assessment criteria used to guide investment initiative ranking. The Committee then heard briefings about and read background material on the initiatives. Three subcommittees, New, Existing and Partnerships, then ranked the initiatives within their category. Input from the public via comments at Committee meetings and in writing were considered in establishing the priority ranking, as was input from Parks Race and Social Justice Change Team. The Committee heard comments on the initial subcommittee rankings at the November 7 public hearing. Then, at the November 21 full Committee meeting, the three subcommittee priority lists were merged into the interim recommendation included in this report. [\[Spreadsheet goes here\]](#)

G. Funding Mechanism

(Per committee charter – if short-term solution is considered, then we address the Pros/Cons of various term lengths in our recommendation. If permanent is considered, then we address Pros/ Cons of mechanisms.)

1. If short-term solution is considered

(Here we refer to a short-term levy as a levy with a term of six years or less. We'll refer to any levy with a term longer than six years as a long-term levy.) All property tax discussions begin with the 1% revenue growth limit. A ballot measure to authorize a levy with a term of six years or less—a short-term levy—can contain language allowing revenue to grow by any fixed rate or by a moving growth rate, like the consumer price index (CPI). Revenue from a long-term or permanent levy, however, can grow at a maximum rate of 1% per year—often not enough to keep pace with inflation. Any levy lasting less than ten years, while constrained by the 1% revenue growth limit, can issue bonds against revenues, but only during the levy's term.

For example, a six-year levy starting with revenues of \$40 million per year would grow at the rate chosen by voters—in this example about 4% per year. This 6-year levy, by the end of its term, would have collected over \$265 million in total and about \$48.7 million in its last year. A ten-year levy, on the other hand, could grow by the maximum of 1% per year, and so could collect a maximum of \$42 million by the end of the sixth year, and \$246 million in total over a six-year period. That's a \$19 million difference over the course of six years. A short-term levy, however, is just that: it would need to be renewed or it would expire, leaving the programs and projects it funded without support. A long-term levy can provide stable support without requiring frequent levy renewal, but the levy's purchasing power will degrade over time as the prices of goods and services increase with inflation.

The City will have about \$90 million in annual levy capacity when the current Parks and Pike Place levies expire at the end of 2014.

2. If long-term/permanent solution is considered

Long-term funding needs require a stable, long-term funding source. We considered two mechanisms to support long-term maintenance and operations: a property tax levy and the creation of a metropolitan parks district (MPD).

Property tax levies are familiar to people. Levies fund a number of Seattle government services, in a way that is simple for voters to understand. On the ballot, a proposition for a levy with a term longer than six years informs voters what the estimated levy rate will be, and usually contains a concrete list of the projects or services included, which, to voters, can increase the perception of accountability. The fact that even long-term levies must be renewed at some point, if funding is to continue, furthers the accountability to voters. Levies, however, are not usually dependable, long-term funding sources that pay for long-term, sustained needs, for the same reason—they must be renewed. While it is possible to enact a permanent levy, such a levy would lose significant purchasing power over time. Any levy with a term over six years is constrained by the 1% revenue growth rate limit, so a permanent levy would

simply lose ground to inflation in perpetuity—eventually forcing voters to consider increasing the levy rate.

A metropolitan parks district (MPD) is a separate City taxing authority. If enacted by voters, such a ballot measure would create a new taxing jurisdiction, with the same boundaries as the city, and create a governing body that could levy up to 75 cents per \$1,000 assessed value. The actual levy rate, however, would be decided each year by the governing body. In the MPD formulation presented to the Committee, the City Council would become the MPD's governing board, and would contract with Seattle Parks and Recreation to provide parks and recreation services. Because an MPD is a permanent funding source, it could reliably fund core programs and services, and capital projects. A levy can fund programs as well, but the possibility that voters choose not to renew adds a degree of risk to such a strategy. An MPD also would not be constrained by the 1% revenue growth rate limit unless it reached its full 75 cent capacity.

In the eyes of some, however, such a significant and new taxing authority could be seen as a weakness. Although an MPD would effectively increase the amount of property tax revenue that could be collected from property owners, it is not broadening the tax base—it is still the same property owners who would be asked to pay up to 75 cents per \$1,000 assessed value. City councilmembers, however, acting as the MPD board and annually setting the rate, would still have to answer to voters if property tax rates became burdensome.

Often, when the City faces revenue shortfalls, parks and recreation services are among the early cuts, as understandably available funds go to public safety and human services. An MPD could protect parks-related funding during a shortfall, as the Council, acting as the MPD board, could increase the MPD rate to make up for cuts in General Fund allocations. There is also a danger that an MPD could supplant Parks' General Fund support—the Council could reduce Parks' General Fund allocation because the MPD provides a stable funding source, making the General Fund allocation seem unnecessary. Parks is somewhat protected from this risk because of a 1967 City Charter amendment that dedicates 10% of certain City revenues to Parks. Yet, these revenues provide around a third of the department's budget—fluctuating slightly each year—not nearly enough to fund Parks' core services and programs.

There is also a question of whether an MPD would provide enough accountability to voters with the City Council as the MPD board. While it is difficult to answer this question directly, this committee hopes the Council would remain responsive to people's needs and changing circumstances over time if it acted as the MPD board.

H. Pros and Cons of Moving Forward With a Ballot Measure

One of the charges given to the Parks Legacy Citizens Advisory Committee by Resolution 31454 is to “advise the Mayor and City Council on the pros and cons for moving forward with a possible ballot measure in 2014 to replace the current parks levy, which expires at the end of 2014.”

Pro: Two central facts became clear to the Committee in our first six months of work: Seattle Parks and Recreation offers a well-loved array of parks and programs, and economic circumstances have stretched Parks’ ability to serve the community and maintain facilities at a consistently high level. The problem statements included in this report speak clearly to the needs. As the Committee has heard and learned through the experience of the recent recession, the City’s General Fund cannot support parks and recreation at a level that meets the needs of the community and preserves the legacy our community has supported and loved for over a hundred years.

Con: The Committee has heard from some members of the public that providing basic park and recreation services is the responsibility of the City’s General Fund: taxpayers should not be asked to pay for basic city services. In addition, the Committee has heard that the City’s taxing capacity cannot support the array of needs in the community, that there are too many competing needs for scarce tax dollars.

Section 6: Next Steps

January and February 2014

- **Goal:** Public open houses, polling and meetings with elected officials
- Open Houses
 - January 23, International District Community Center
 - January 28, High Point Community Center
 - January 30, Bitter Lake Community Center

Polling

- Polling to occur in January 2014
- Polling analysis to Parks Legacy Citizens Advisory Committee by mid-February

February 20, 2014

- **Meeting #12 goal:** Review public comments and the polling analysis. Discuss possible changes to the Committee recommendations and Interim Report; recommendations on funding amount and funding mechanism.

February 27, 2014 – HOLD FOR POSSIBLE NEW MEETING DATE

- **Meeting #13 goal:** Discuss possible changes to the Committee recommendations and Interim Report

March 6, 2014

- **Meeting #14 goal:** Approve Final Report to be sent to the Mayor and City Council

April, 2014

- Review of Final Report by City Council

May, 2014

- Ordinance considered by City Council

August, 2014

- Ballot measure goes to Seattle voters

Appendix A: Public Process Summary—June-November 2013

This summary is provided as a high level outline of the public process and the comments that have been received to date. All of the input received has been distributed directly to the committee members.

A. Opportunities For Input

Key Dates

- **June** - *Second draft* of Parks Legacy Plan released with proposed recommendations based on public comments received from April to May.
- **June** - Parks Legacy Citizens' Advisory Committee (PLCAC) begins meeting
- **June 2013 - March 2014** - Opportunity for public comment at each PLCAC meeting and via email or US mail.
- **November 7** - Public hearing on proposed investment initiatives
- **UPCOMING: January 2014** - Citywide open houses

B. Public Involvement

Parks developed a comprehensive public involvement process which included a project website, extensive community and media outreach, and briefings with City Councilmembers, community leaders, city departments, and the Associated Recreation Council.

C. Race and Social Justice (RSJI)

Parks' Race and Social Justice Change Team worked closely with the Citizens' Advisory Committee. They conducted outreach to 24 historically underrepresented groups and met with 16 of those in "backyard" settings to gather input on the Parks Legacy Plan and individual investment initiatives. The Change Team

submitted a report to the PLCAC, posted on the Legacy Plan webpage, outlining their recommendations for the proposed investment initiatives that have RSJI implications.

The Change Team representatives briefed the full Citizens' Advisory Committee and attended all subcommittee meetings to discuss their recommendations.

D. Outreach for PLCAC meetings and public hearing:

Press releases announcing all committee meetings went to 400 local news outlets, multiple neighborhood blogs, the City's official minority media list, and the department's Parkways blog.

Outreach included:

- An invitation to underrepresented communities emphasizing the importance of hearing from them was translated into 7 languages and posted on the Office of Immigrant and Refugee's ethnic media page.
- Publicized on Twitter
- Posted on 54 Facebook pages
- The Parks Legacy Plan website has received 6,575 page views since April 2013.
- Email invitations and updates sent to 450 interested parties and everyone that signed in legibly to a Parks Legacy meeting or event.
- Email update sent to Parks staff
- Flyers passed out at Washington Wellness Fair, Maple Leaf opening, and Building 30 opening event

Coverage included:

- KUOW story on Major Maintenance needs at Green Lake Park
- Local city blogs, including the West Seattle Blog and Capitol Hill Seattle, publicized PLCAC meetings and the public hearing

E. Results

To paraphrase a former Parks superintendent, *"Seattleites love their parks; they just love them in different ways."*

1. Participation

Eighty-five individuals signed up to speak at the November public hearing, and an additional 530 people participated through email, written comment, or speaking at a Parks Legacy Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting. Parks also received 127 comment cards from individuals representing historically underrepresented communities and Parks' Change Team met with 16 different groups at their location of choice, reaching an additional 280 individuals.

2. Comment tally

Comments made at the public hearing, via email, or at the bimonthly committee meetings predominantly fell into one of 15 categories listed below. Please note the majority of people that spoke

at meetings and the public hearing also submitted written comments—some more than once—so there is some over-counting in the figures reported above. Some individuals spoke or wrote to more than one topic.

The tallies and short summaries below reflect the **written** comments' main topic or concern, and do not attempt to capture every point made in each individual comment submitted.

Beacon Hill – 5 comments

Beacon Hill playfield is used extensively by the elementary school and is a mud pit. This field and Cleveland High School need to have synthetic turf and lighting.

Community Centers and programming – 10 comments

Support for funding to make community centers and programming more accessible and inclusive. This is a cultural and social justice imperative. Increasing scholarship funding opportunities through the creation of a citywide scholarship fund in partnership with the Associated Recreation Council (ARC), with higher allocation to centers in higher poverty neighborhoods. Support for the programming investment initiatives.

Environmental Education – 5 comments

Support for environmental education initiatives. This should be higher up on the priority list, with higher funding amounts.

Green Seattle Partnership – 8 comments

Strong support for this investment initiative. GSP is one of the most cost-efficient organizations ever to organize, educate, and support so many volunteers who accomplish so much to the benefit of the entire city.

Greenways – 8 comments

Support for safe routes to parks that provide environments for families to safely walk and bike to city parks. Many proponents felt strongly that this funding should be to support Seattle Parks and Recreation efforts solely.

Lake City Community Center – 6 comments

Comments focused on Lake City CC being operated by the Chamber of Commerce at less than a full service facility with limited programming, and a request for a new full service community center in this neighborhood.

Magnolia Playfield (and other playfields) – 149 comments

95% of these comments supported improved drainage and synthetic turf to be installed at Magnolia's south playfield, at Magnuson playfield additions, and at Smith Cove playfields. 3% of comments were opposed to synthetic turf.

Maintenance – 7 comments

Interim Report of the Parks Legacy Citizens' Advisory Committee
Draft Report for Discussion

Many proponents spoke to numerous investment initiatives, but also emphasized that Parks should fix what we have first and then deal with other matters. Eliminating the maintenance deficiency should be the first order of business.

Metropolitan Park District (MPD) vs. Levy – 6 comments

Several individuals spoke to either their support or disapproval of a levy or an MPD. Those opposed expressed concerns about accountability and the inability of voters to repeal the MPD.

Off Leash Areas – 19 comments

Support for funding to be directed to building new dog parks throughout the city and for better maintenance of these parks. Small opposition to funding being directed to off leash areas.

Other – 16 comments

This category encompasses letters of support from various organizations and groups for a wide range of investment initiatives, while also advocating for their respective organizations, such as: the Zoo, the Central Waterfront committee, Friends of Olmsted parks, and Queen Ann Boulevard.

P-patches – 62 comments

Strong support for the Urban Food and P-Patch investment initiative, which would renovate existing p-patch gardens and develop potential new gardens.

Playfields – 11 comments

Support for maintenance improvements to playfields around the city.

Pools – 17 comments

Some proponents spoke for improvements and extended hours at Pop Mounser pool. Some made a request for a new outdoor pool in NE Seattle. Some were against an outdoor pool in North Beacon Hill; some were in support of an outdoor pool in North Beacon Hill.

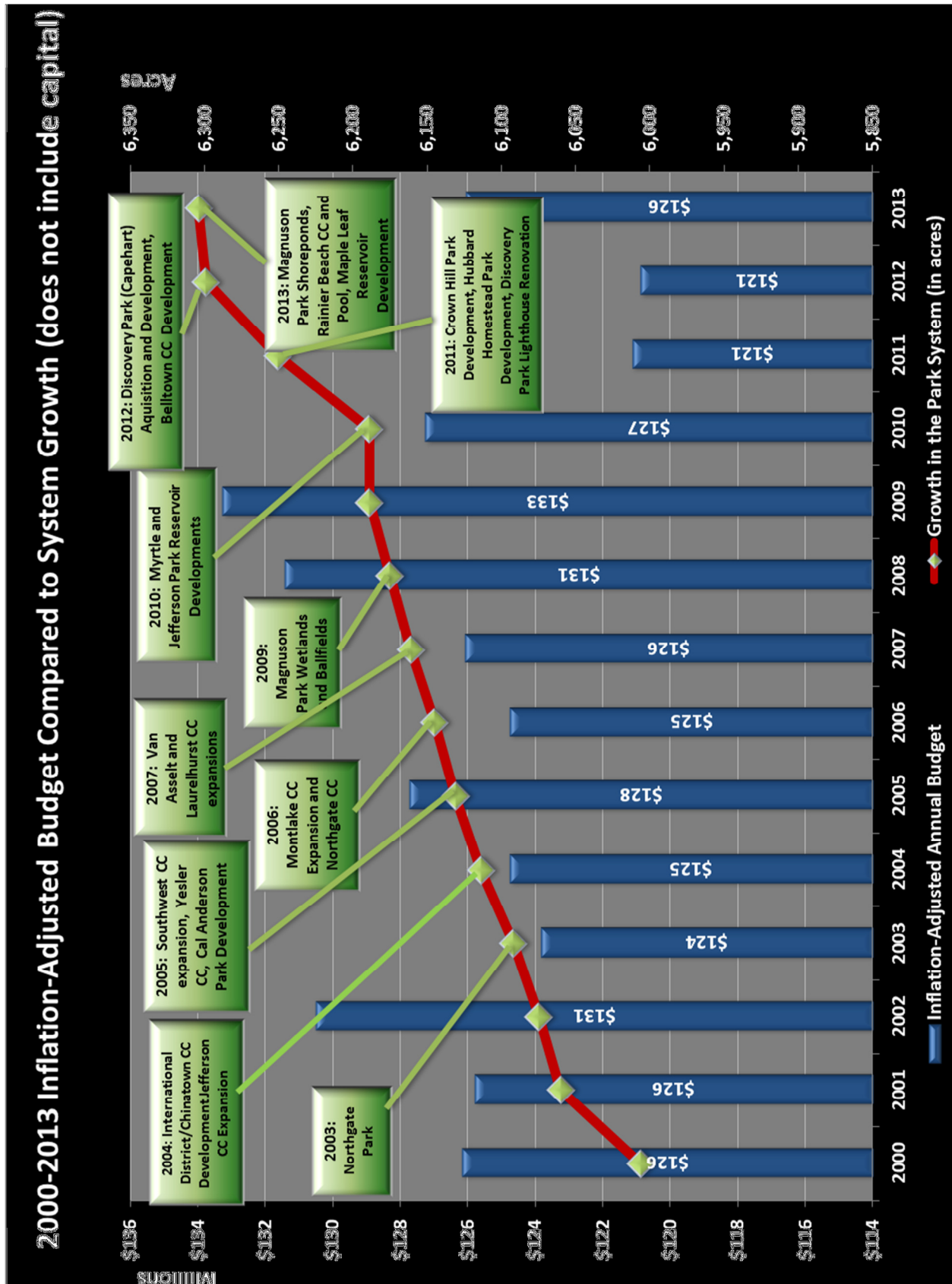
Smith Cove – 6 comments

These comments were all in favor of improvements to the playfield portion of the site.

Appendix B: Recent Funding Information

A. Funding History

The attached chart shows Seattle Parks and Recreation's budget compared to the growth of the park and recreation system itself.



B. City Levies

The attached table shows the City of Seattle's current property tax levies. Both the Parks and Pike Place levies will expire at the end of 2014.

Levy Collections in Dollars - 2013

AV =	117,009,682,651
General Fund	\$219,572,663
Fam. & Ed	\$32,422,010
Trans - BTG	\$41,815,008
Pike Place	\$12,500,000
Parks	\$24,250,000
Housing	\$20,714,286
Library	\$17,000,000
<i>Available Annual Capacity</i>	<i>\$52,960,890.54</i>
Maximum City Collection	\$421,234,857.54